Labor and Loss

Trace how a demand for cheap labor changed lives across the Atlantic.

SS24.8.12 "Trace the cultural, economic, and political effects of European colonization on the populations of Africa, the Americas, and Europe. 12a Explain how the desire for cheap labor led to the enslavement and decline of the Indigenous..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline why settlers wanted workers, circle two ways they controlled Taíno labor, and number three linked effects of that labor demand on people's lives or populations.

The Cost of Labor on Hispaniola

1. On Hispaniola in the early 1500s, Spanish settlers wanted gold and farm products to sell across the Atlantic. Mining and farming took many workers, but settlers did not want to pay them fairly. Spanish officials granted some settlers control over the labor of Indigenous Taíno people through a system called the encomienda. Officials claimed the settlers would protect and teach the Taíno, yet many settlers forced them to mine gold or work fields. The demand for low-cost labor turned a colonial business plan into a system of coercion.

2. Forced work kept many Taíno people away from their own fields and families. Long hours, dangerous conditions, and lost food supplies weakened communities. Diseases such as smallpox, brought from Europe, spread among people with no prior exposure and killed many. Disease was a major cause of population loss, but forced labor, hunger, and violence also contributed. As Taíno communities lost people, it became harder to grow food and maintain traditions. Some Taíno resisted Spanish control, while others survived and passed on parts of their culture.

3. Spain's rulers claimed Hispaniola as part of their empire and collected wealth from colonial production. Some settlers grew rich, but the shrinking Taíno population made it harder for them to obtain workers. Settlers increasingly forced enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to work on the island. This expanded the slave trade and devastated African families and communities. In Spain, profits encouraged further colonization, while debates grew over how Indigenous people should be treated. For the Taíno, Spanish political control meant losing much of their power over land and labor.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did settlers' desire for low-cost labor lead to a system that controlled Taíno workers?

2. Trace how forced work could lead to a decline in the Taíno population. Include two linked effects from the passage.

3. Why would it be inaccurate to say that forced labor was the only cause of Taíno population loss?

4. How did the decline of the Taíno population change settlers' labor practices, and what was one effect on African communities?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise a Spanish governor on Hispaniola in the early 1500s. Write four sentences proposing a change to the labor system, explaining how it could affect Taíno health and population, and predicting one economic or political challenge.

ANSWER KEY

Labor and Loss

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.12

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline why settlers wanted workers, circle two ways they controlled Taíno labor, and number three linked effects of that labor demand on people's lives or populations. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did settlers' desire for low-cost labor lead to a system that controlled Taíno workers?	**Settlers wanted workers for mining and farming without paying them fairly. Spanish officials gave settlers control over Taíno labor through the encomienda.**
2	Trace how forced work could lead to a decline in the Taíno population. Include two linked effects from the passage.	**Forced work kept Taíno people from growing their own food. Hunger and harsh working conditions weakened communities and contributed to population loss.**
3	Why would it be inaccurate to say that forced labor was the only cause of Taíno population loss?	**Diseases brought from Europe were a major cause of death. Hunger and violence also contributed to the decline.**
4	How did the decline of the Taíno population change settlers' labor practices, and what was one effect on African communities?	**As settlers had more difficulty obtaining workers, they increasingly forced enslaved Africans to the island. The expanded slave trade devastated African families and communities.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

End forced labor assignments and pay adults who freely choose to work in the mines or fields. Let Taíno communities keep enough time and land to grow food. These changes could reduce exhaustion and hunger, though they would not stop every disease. Mine owners might resist paying workers and pressure the governor to restore forced labor.

Accept other evidence-based causal chains that distinguish disease from the effects of forced labor. For Part 3, accept a workable change with a plausible effect on health or population and a specific challenge.